

**Saunders, Kelley**

Mission Hills District Appeal

**From:** David Demer [David.Demer@noaa.gov]  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 28, 2007 8:41 AM  
**To:** Kelley Saunders; Planning Planning  
**Cc:** sdemer@cox.net; James Lawson; Council Member Kevin Faulconer  
**Subject:** Re: HRB Hearing 28 June, 2007 1PM

**Attachments:** Kelley\_Saunders\_HRB\_28June2007.pdf



Kelley\_Saunders\_HR  
 B\_28June2007...

Dear Ms. Saunders,

Please find attached a second letter of expressed interest in regard to the hearing by the Historical Resources Board (HRB), scheduled and advertised for June 28, 2007 at 1:00 PM, to consider the designation of the Mission Hills Historic District nomination. I understand that the hearing for this nomination has been delayed until further notice. I hereby request to speak at the hearing when it is rescheduled. If I am unavailable at that time due to professional obligations, I request that my letters be distributed to the Board and the opinions of my wife and I thereby heard. Thank-you for this consideration.

Sincerely,

David A. Demer, Ph.D.

Kelley Saunders wrote:

- > Dr. Demer,
- >
- > Thank you for your email and letter with your position on the establishment of the Mission Hills District. I would like to clarify a few points and issues raised in your email and letter:
- >
- > First, due to a docketing error, the Board will NOT be considering the Mission Hills District tomorrow at the June 28th hearing. The item will be docketed for review by the Board in July, and all property owners within the district boundaries will be noticed of that hearing.
- >
- > Second, the applicants who submitted the district nomination did propose that your property be identified as a contributing resource to the district, meaning that it was built within the period of significance, retains integrity in terms of materials and design, and conveys the significance of the district. In our review of the nomination, staff disagreed with that conclusion based upon modifications that we believe occurred relatively early in the home's history, and we therefore recommended that the property be classified as non-contributing. Ultimately, the Board will decide which properties will be classified as contributing and non-contributing, when and if the district is established.
- >
- > Third, I would like to clarify what appears to be some misconceptions
- > regarding the impacts of historic designation. Within a historic
- > district, all properties are required to be maintained in conformance
- > with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards, which do allow
- > expansion of historic resources to accommodate their continued use and
- > viability. For contributing resources, these regulations are more
- > restrictive than for non-contributing resources. Contributing
- > resources are required to maintain key character-defining features and
- > historic materials; however, modifications and additions to the
- > properties ARE permitted under the Standards. This includes both
- > single story and two-story additions, which should be set back from
- > the main facade and should not compete with or overwhelm the historic

> home. The regulations are less strict for non-contributing resources,  
> which can be substantially modified from their current appearance or  
> even demolished. However, the new construction will be reviewed for conformance with the general character of the district. Excessive regulation of paint color and landscaping (with the exception of any historic cobble walls which may be present along the right-of-way) are not proposed as part of this application. Finally, it has been consistently shown that historic designation does not decrease property values and, in fact, increases them. There is a market for historic properties and neighborhoods, and such properties often continue to sell well during slow-downs in the real estate market.

>  
> If you have any additional questions regarding the responsibilities and benefits of district designation and what it means in terms of regulation or impacts on property, please feel free to call or email me, and I would be more than happy to answer those for you.

>  
> Thank you and have a wonderful day.

>  
>  
> Kelley Saunders  
> Senior Planner  
> Historical Resources  
> City Planning & Community Investment  
> City of San Diego  
> 202 C Street, MS 4A  
> San Diego CA 92101

>  
> Work: (619) 533-6508  
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>  
> Hours:  
> Monday thru Thursday (8:30 am - 6:00 pm) Every other Friday (8:30 am -  
> 5:00 pm)

>  
> Correspondents should assume that all communication to or from this address is recorded and may be viewed by third parties.

>  
>>>> "David Demer" <David.Demer@noaa.gov> 06/27/07 4:34 PM >>>

> Dear Ms. Saunders,

>  
> Please find attached a letter of expressed interest in regard to the  
> hearing by the Historical Resources Board (HRB), scheduled for June  
> 28,  
> 2007 at 1:00 PM, to consider the designation of the Mission Hills  
> Historic District nomination. I hereby request to speak at the  
> hearing and seek instruction for filing a speaker slip concerning the designation.

>  
> Sincerely,  
>  
> David A. Demer, Ph.D.

>  
>

1819 Sheridan Avenue  
San Diego, CA, 92103

June 28, 2007

Kelley Saunders, Planner  
Historical Resources Board  
City Planning & Community Investment  
Planning Division  
202 C Street, MS 5A  
San Diego, CA 92101  
kmsaunders@sandiego.gov

Dear Ms. Saunders,

This is my second letter to you in regard to the hearing by the Historical Resources Board (HRB), scheduled for June 28, 2007 at 1:00 PM, to consider the designation of the Mission Hills Historic District nomination.

In response to the first point in your email dated June 27, 2007 5:26 PM, I understand that the Board will not be considering the proposed District at the scheduled and advertised hearing, rather in July. I note that the HRB website, as of 08:20 AM on June 28, 2007, indicates that Report No. HRB-07-030 is Item 7 on the revised agenda for the hearing on 28 June, 2007.

Regarding the second point in your email, you explained that: "the applicants who submitted the district nomination did propose that [our] property be identified as a contributing resource to the district, meaning that it was built within the period of significance, retains integrity in terms of materials and design, and conveys the significance of the district." My wife attended the initial hearing on May 24, 2007 and noted that our property was then proposed to be classified as a contributing resource. However, the revised agenda for the HRB hearing scheduled for 28 June, 2007 appears to contradict your account. It states in Item 7, point 7:

7. Classify the following 18 properties as Non-Contributing Resources ~~consistent with direction from the Board at the initial hearing on May 24, 2007:~~

St #	Street Name	APN	Status Code	St #	Street Name	APN	Status Code
1801	Lyndon	443-650-21-00	6Z	<del>1819</del>	<del>Sheridan</del>	<del>443-650-18-00</del>	<del>6Z</del>
1805	Lyndon	443-650-22-00	6L	1823	Sheridan	443-650-19-00	6Z
1811	Lyndon	443-650-23-00	6L	1844	Sheridan	443-611-17-00	6L
1845	Lyndon	443-620-03-00	6Z	1889	Sheridan	443-612-02-00	6Z
1848	Lyndon	443-612-12-00	6Z	1890	Sheridan	443-611-23-00	6L
1855	Lyndon	443-620-06-00	6Z	1814	Sunset	443-432-23-00	6Z
1868	Lyndon	443-612-14-00	6Z	1821	Sunset	443-611-11-00	6L
1875	Lyndon	443-620-18-00	6Z	1874	Sunset	443-432-09-00	6Z
1811	Sheridan	443-650-16-00	6Z	1884	Sunset	443-432-08-00	6Z
<del>1819</del>	<del>Sheridan</del>	<del>443-650-18-00</del>	<del>6Z</del>	<del>1819</del>	<del>Sheridan</del>	<del>443-650-18-00</del>	<del>6Z</del>

Continuing, you explained that "In [their] review of the nomination, staff disagreed with that conclusion based upon modifications that [staff] believe occurred relatively early in the home's history, and [you] therefore recommended that the property be classified as non-contributing."

June 28, 2007

This exemplifies the subjective nature of the proposed District and indeed the answers that will ultimately be required of the Board in response to the nomination. Starting with the justification of the applicants, the years during which our house was built is factual, but whether or not those years were within a "period of significance" is subjective. The answer to whether or not our house "retains integrity in terms of materials and design," could be factually judged by engineers and architects, but apparently was subjectively judged by both the applicants and HRB staff. What does it mean to "convey the significance of the district"? Ask that to ten people and get ten different answers. Finally, HRB staff concluded that modifications had been made to our house relatively early in its history. It would be difficult, if not impossible to find houses built in San Diego during the period of 1910 to 1950 that have not been modified. Even in the last decade, we have witnessed major remodels of most of the houses in the proposed District. Ironically, it seems to me, those houses that have been remodeled most recently and extensively are most likely included in the list of proposed contributing resources.

In response to the third point in your email, I clearly need to learn more about what the regulations will and will not be, for contributing and non-contributing resources, if the proposed District is indeed established. These are difficult to locate and interpret and any guidance you can provide in this regard is appreciated. Please also let me know how I can obtain a copy of the application for the proposed Mission Hills Historic District and all of the supporting documentation that has been submitted by the applicants and your staff in this regard.

Continuing on your third point, you state that "it has been consistently shown that historic designation does not decrease property values and, in fact, increases them." What are your references for this claim? If true, it could only be a valid claim in a statistical sense, and some property owners could still be aggrieved by financial hardship and a significant reduction in the value of their home and land investment.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that when the members of the Board do consider the designation of the Mission Hills Historic District nomination, their decisions will be highly subjective. Also, not all of the houses in the Mission Hills community are historically significant, architecturally precious, or structurally sound enough to withstand the challenges of nature over the next 100 years. The subjective decision to designate a property or collection of properties as a historical resource has far reaching ramifications concerning people's financial situations, their health and community. The applicants, and the HRB staff and Board should not force their artistic preferences for architecture and historical significance upon property owners. Rather, individual property owners should be allowed to make their own decisions whether or not their homes fit these criteria, and whether they wish to contribute less tax to our community through a Mills Act designation. Your job should be to educate the community and to assist in the process when asked by property owners to do so. Thank-you again for considering our views.

Sincerely,



David A. Demer, Ph.D. and Shirley Jo Demer

Cc: [planning@sandiego.gov](mailto:planning@sandiego.gov);  
[kevinfaulconer@sandiego.gov](mailto:kevinfaulconer@sandiego.gov); and  
[jmlawson@sandiego.gov](mailto:jmlawson@sandiego.gov)

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